

milwaukee zen center
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MZC provides a place for meditation, study and reflection, leading to inner awakening and mindful, compassionate action through traditional Soto Zen Practice.

Peace and Justice

*By Reirin Gumbel,
MZC resident priest*

Recently I was asked to talk to a class of college students about peace and justice from a Buddhist perspective. These are my thoughts at this time:

Peace of mind will lead to peace in the world. We need to come to peace within ourselves, if we want to have an impact on our surroundings.

A student asked the teacher: "How can my sitting here save the world?" The reply was: "At least it saves the world from you."

Justice is not a Buddhist term. When we think of justice, we usually remember unjust things that happened in the past. Buddhists are encouraged to be in the present and see what can be done now, rather than taking revenge for past grievances. And it is most often about what went wrong for me. I have a certain perspective from which I see injustice happening. It is important to understand that from a different perspective, the incident may not look the same.

We feel that all humans are created equal, and they need to be treated equally. However, equality is not necessarily just. If two persons are watching a performance in a crowd, the taller one can see everything, but the short one cannot see. If we treat them equally, they will both get a stool. What is needed is equity instead of equality. Equity means the shorter one gets a stool; the taller one does not need one.



In order to have equity, we need to look carefully at everybody's needs. Justitia, the goddess of justice, is blindfolded. Justice does not take sides: It stays neutral. Both sides of the balance are given

the same amount. But that may not reflect the needs of a person who has been treated unfairly.

Buddha is the Awakened One, the one who looks carefully and understands the nature of reality. Wisdom and compassion are the wings of the bird that can fly in freedom.



Wisdom sees everything arise and pass away; all phenomena are empty of a separate self. There is no-thing.

When we understand how things work in this world, we will naturally have compassion for the suffering that is the result of unwholesome view. Compassion will generate the wish to give, and we will certainly provide food, shelter and safety for those who have been denied basic human rights. Dana paramita also means giving the gift of the teachings, and we will give those freely to victims and perpetrators alike.

It is painful to realize that I myself may be a perpetrator. To look carefully means to admit that I have been buying a product cheaply that was made in unfair working conditions, consuming coffee and chocolate from places that were originally providing food for local people, and using paper that came from clear-cuts. In order to have peace and justice in the world, we need to change our habitual ways and become conscious of cause and effect.

An enlightened being will have a sense of non-separateness, and generosity comes without thinking.

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Weekly Practice Schedule

Sunday Morning

9:30 zazen
10:05 kinhin
10:15 dharma talk
11:00 informal tea

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday Mornings

6:15 zazen
6:50 kinhin
7:00 zazen
7:30 service

Thursday Mornings

6 to 7:30 informal zazen

Wednesday Evenings

6:30 zazen
7:00 kinhin
7:10 zazen

Saturdays

(unless there is a longer sitting that day)

7:30 zazen
8:00 kinhin
8:10 zazen
8:40 service
9:00 oryoki breakfast
9:45 work
10:15 reading and discussion



Stay in touch with MZC

See our complete schedule of practice and activities at mkzen.org. Subscribe on that website to our monthly email newsletter. Visit us on Facebook, and contact us at kogyoan@gmail.com

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*For a complete schedule of Zen Center Practice,
please visit mkzen.org*

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The wide spectrum of Buddhist schools, from Theravada to Zen, agree that the Dharma is as concerned with involvement in the world of conventional reality as with absolute truth and personal liberation.

Bikkhu Bodhi, a monk in the school of the Elders and translator of Pali texts, and Taigen Leighton, a Zen teacher and Dogen scholar, show clearly that Buddhism teaches kindness and respect for all forms of life. The Buddha taught beggars and kings alike, and the Dalai Lama addresses working-class people as well as world leaders.

The precepts say that we all need to live in harmony and be concerned with the welfare of each other. For the Vietnamese Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, compassion is the understanding that we are the other. One day, when he was already living in exile, he heard the news of a 12-year-old girl who had been raped by a sea pirate and who had jumped into the ocean and drowned herself. He meditated for a long time, looking clearly at causes and conditions for this horrible act and realized that he himself could be the girl or the pirate if conditions had been that way. He then wrote the famous poem "Please Call Me By My True Names," which included these lines:

I am the twelve-year-old girl,
refugee on a small boat,
who throws herself into the ocean
after being raped by a sea pirate,
and I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable
of seeing and loving. ...

Please call me by my true names,
so I can hear all my cries and my laughs at once,
so I can see that my joy and pain are one.

Please call me by my true names,
so I can wake up,
and so the door of my heart can be left open,
the door of compassion.

(from Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace*)

Zen Center Activities



The Milwaukee summer was mild and sunny. We had a Women's Gathering in July with zazen, poems, movement and outside walking.

Marcia Lieberman from the San Francisco Zen Center joined us for three weeks and taught temple arts: Brush on Paper, Taste of Ritual (Tea, and Oryoki) and Zen Gardening. She gave two well-received Dharma talks, and we performed the Full Moon Ceremony in August with bells and call-and-response chanting.

We held a couple of work days on the grounds, and a new patio (photo above) was completed that will serve as a quiet refuge on hot days. It was initiated with a memorial ceremony on Hiroshima Day.

Another welcome visitor was Steve Weintraub, the director of Branching Streams, an organization that supports sanghas whose teachers have been trained at San Francisco Zen Center in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. He gave a talk to a large audience, which filled our zendo to capacity.

Activities for social service and activism included two meetings of prison teachers, who were invited by our Priest Emerita Tonen O'Connor, to discuss their respective work in various correctional facilities around Wisconsin. Reirin joined a prayer walk for peace around the Sherman Park neighborhood, and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship put on the film *I Am Not Your Negro* in a series on racial justice, which was co-sponsored by the Tippecanoe Presbyterian Church. The BPF also held a potluck picnic in Lake Park, and those who held out dur-

ing the storm were rewarded by great food and sunshine afterwards.

On the third Saturday of every month a half-day sitting was conducted, and on the second and fourth Saturdays a small group enjoyed oryoki breakfast. The Jewel Mirror Sesshin (photo at right) at Hokyoji was held in August, with co-teachers Dokai Georgesesen and Reirin Gumbel.

The fall will bring new energy, with several people making commitments for sustained practice during a six-week practice period, new study sessions, and gatherings with other Buddhist groups. MZC offers two one-day retreats in October and November, and we are again invited to the Rohatsu Sesshin at Hokyoji in December. Please join us any time. Call Reirin to register.



Fundraising

The Milwaukee Zen Center's annual fund drive is under way until the end of December 2017. We will not send out our annual appeal letter this year, so please consider this our plea for your continued support.

MZC has had an ambitious year in 2017, most significantly joining the Branching Streams organization based at the San Francisco Zen Center. Our membership in the organization has brought us visitors from California to give us instruction on temple arts and gardening, and to present dharma talks.

In October we're also undertaking our first practice period, in which members commit to increased levels of commitment to our Zen practice.

Our resident priest, Reirin Gumbel, has just finished two years of service in Milwaukee, and she's established herself as a valuable member of the local Buddhist community.

All these activities – and the continuing upkeep of our 1800s vintage home – make your support essential.

You can become a guardian of the center by aligning your monthly pledge with one of the animal spirits from Chinese mythology: Blue Dragon, \$100 per month; Red Bird, \$50 per month, White Tiger, \$30 per month, or Black Tortoise, \$10 per month. We encourage members to make monthly gifts automatically, via the PayPal button on our website or online bill-pay programs at their own banks. Regular payments like this especially help us with our financial planning.

Or you can make a one-time donation as part of our annual campaign, paying through our website or sending your check to:

The Milwaukee Zen Center, 2825 N. Stowell Ave., Milwaukee WI 53211.

All donations are greatly appreciated.

